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TAGS: [MARR](#) [MCAP](#) [MASS](#) [PREL](#) [UY](#)
SUBJECT: URUGUAY'S MILITARY ENHANCES ITS INTERNATIONAL
VISIBILITY AND STRENGTHENS TIES WITH U.S.

Classified By: Ambassador Frank Baxter
for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

Summary

11. (U) There has been a significant increase in Uruguay-U.S. military cooperation since the Cabinet shake up on March 1. The Uruguayan Navy is participating for the second year running in the PANAMAX exercise August 11-22, 2008. U.S. SOUTHCOM provided critical support by providing USD 573,000 to fuel the Uruguayan ship ROU4 General Artigas, allowing that vessel to reach and participate in the exercise. PANAMAX is currently the only U.S.-sponsored regional exercise that the Uruguayan Navy takes part in, as it ceased participation in UNITAS with the election of the Vasquez government in 2005. Still, Uruguay's first hosting of the Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) South exercises in September, its strong performance in June's Forces Comando Counter Terrorism (CT) Competition, its receipt of USD 800,000 in USG non-military aid, budding security-related science and technology partnerships with SOUTHCOM and the Office of Naval Research, the recent procurement of 16 27-foot patrol boats for MINISTAH's new maritime mission, and the July visit of Uruguayan Minister of Defense (MOD) Jose Bayardi to the U.S., which included a meeting with Secretary of Defense Gates, are all positive signs that Uruguay's armed forces are assuming a wider regional profile. End Summary.

PANAMAX

12. (SBU) The GOU considers its participation in PANAMAX 2008, a multinational training exercise co-sponsored by the U.S. Navy and the Government of Panama, as critically important to maintaining a well-trained military and good regional relations. The Uruguayan Navy ship ROU4 General Artigas departed Montevideo as scheduled on July 20. In addition to the 200 sailors and marines aboard, the Uruguayan Armed Forces are participating in PANAMAX with 25 PKO instructors in Coban, Guatemala, a special operations planning cell at Homestead AFB, a naval operations planning cell in Panama, and a BO-105 Eurocopter with two flight crews. This extensive participation underlines the important opportunity that PANAMAX represents to the Uruguayan Navy.

13. (SBU) U.S. SOUTHCOM provided funding for 80 percent of the fuel needed for the Uruguayan ship ROU4 General Artigas to carry the participants to Panama. Uruguay had planned to combine the exercise with its annual rotation of MINUSTAH peacekeeping troops and use UN transportation funds to help

cover the cost of transportation for both missions. Days before the departure of the ship, however, the UN determined that the travel funds would be used for air transport of the peacekeeping troops, leaving the ship short of money for fuel. SOUTHCOM's ability and willingness to provide the last-minute funds was greatly appreciated by the Uruguayan Navy. Earlier this month, the Uruguayan Chief of Naval Operations hosted a lunch of thanks for the Ambassador and ODC representatives. Ambassador Baxter noted "overwhelming warmth" from the Uruguayans, emphasizing the good relations stemming from SOUTHCOM's largesse.

Other Areas of Cooperation

¶4. (C) PANAMAX is only one of a number of examples of recent bilateral military-to-military cooperation. Uruguay's September hosting of PKO South exercises, the June recognition of the strength of Uruguay's Special Forces, eleven separate Humanitarian Assistance Program (HAP) projects, ongoing discussions between military and civilian counterparts on science and technology, increased leadership through MINUSTAH, and the recent MOD visit to Miami, Washington, New York and Connecticut all underline Uruguay's renewed willingness to engage with the U.S. Military.

--PKO South: In September, Uruguay and the U.S. Army will co-host over 200 multinational troops in Montevideo for the PKO-South 2008 Decision-Making Exercise. This will be the first time that Uruguay hosts the training. The exercise will be run by U.S. Army, South with the Connecticut National Guard (Connecticut is Uruguay's Partner State) as

instructors. Commanders from the Connecticut National Guard will observe the exercise as well as pursue civilian public works partnerships under the Science and Technology Agreement.

--Forces Comando 2008: In June, Uruguay's Special Forces in CT received second place recognition in a competition-- held in Texas-- between 17 WHA countries that promoted military-to-military relationships, increased communication between and within militaries, and improved regional security. Uruguay's participation was further notable because this is the first time since the current administration came to power that the Uruguayan military has been allowed to take their own weapons to a training exercise. This allowance was approved by Congress at the last minute due to efforts by MOD Bayardi, and followed strong advocacy from the ODC.

--Humanitarian Assistance Program (HAP): Although HAP is a program devoted to purely civilian projects, some of its donations were previously controversial in Uruguay. Nevertheless, in 2007 SOUTHCOM gave USD 772,000 to projects in Uruguay including clinics and emergency operations centers. In 2008, USD 797,000 has been approved for more emergency operations centers, a disaster relief warehouse, and many small projects including the purchase of medical equipment and computers for schools.

--Representatives from SOUTHCOM's Office of Science and Technology and the Office of Naval Research composed part of the delegation accompanying U/S Paula Dobriansky on her July visit to Uruguay, which served as a jumping point for several enhanced relationships, including commitments to pursue joint data sharing activities and bioinformatics programs.

--As part of the new naval port security mission in Haiti, in December 2007 Uruguay offered to procure 16 patrol boats on behalf of MINUSTAH. Although there was some delay in getting approval from the Uruguayan Congress to make the purchase which will later be reimbursed by the UN, currently 4 of the boats have been purchased from Miami-based Boston Whaler and transported to Haiti. The maritime mission will provide port security and some interdiction of maritime trafficking and will be manned by the Uruguayan Coast Guard and Navy. The GOU is proud of being selected to take the lead in this

initiative, and it reflects the confidence that the UN has in Uruguay's professionalism and capabilities.

--During his U.S. visit in July, MOD Bayardi met with SecDef Gates and pledged to increase communication with the DOD, and in particular to receive guidance on the development of joint unit command. In Connecticut, he requested assistance from the National Guard to instruct Uruguay on the use of the recently purchased radar units. In Miami, his briefings on the 4th fleet prepared him for a very positive press interview, in which he accurately explained the intention and extent of the recently deployed fleet.

Comment

¶5. (C) Given the left-leaning nature of the current administration's core constituency, the GOU is treading in politically dangerous waters by increasing the extent of bilateral military relations. Nevertheless, the GOU has taken a decision to grow the relationship. This is a positive development, because despite its small size Uruguay is a respected voice in the region, and its peacekeeping activities are recognized around the world. During his U.S. visit in presentations at the Inter-American Defense Council and the Center for Strategic and International Studies, MOD Bayardi expressed objection to rushing to create the UNASUR Defense Council. This is an example of the positive regional contributions we hope Uruguay will make regarding military issues, and an enhanced relationship with Uruguay's armed forces is a good way to keep such contributions coming. End Comment.

Baxter